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**Turkish Proverbs in *A Grammar of the Turkish Language*  
by Thomas Vaughan (1709)**

As Erika Hitzgrath Gilson writes:

... There are (...) sources for Ottoman-Turkish without which the study of historical Turkish linguistics – phonology and dialectology in particular – will be quite restricted. These are recordings of the Turkish language by foreigners, represented in their own respective writing system as they perceived and interpreted the acoustical shape of the utterances. Such “Transkriptiostexte” supply invaluable data for Ottoman-Turkish of the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries (Gilson 1987: 1).

One of the such “Transkriptionstexte” is *A Grammar of the Turkish Language* written by an Englishman – Thomas Vaughan – and published in London 1709.

A few words about the author and the content of its work follow.

The author mentions his profession on the front page of his *Grammar* where we can read “Thomas Vaughan, Late of Smyrna, Merchant”.<sup>1</sup> From the second page we find out that the book was dedicated to George Boddington Esq. of whom Thomas Vaughan was a nephew. Gilson writes in her book that very little is known about Vaughan’s life, but she adds that he was associated

<sup>1</sup> The original copy of the *Grammar* is not available due to numerous ticks and reading-marks, both in the margin and the body of the text. However, the facsimile of the *Grammar* is available, published by The Scholar Press Limited in Menston, England 1968 under the title: *Thomas Vaughan. A Grammar of the Turkish Language 1709*.

with the Levant Company and it is quite probable that he could have stayed in Turkish-speaking territory for 12 years from 1697 to 1709. She also pays attention to comments included in the *Preface* to his *Grammar* which allows us to deduce that he was well-educated, knew several foreign languages, and the field of his various interests was very broad (Gilson 1987: 3).

Vaughan's work consists of the following parts: *The Preface* (v–xxiii), *Turkish alphabet (Arabic script)*, seventeen grammatical chapters including some general remarks on the language and the parts of speech (pp. 1–53), *Turkish Dialogues* (pp. 54–71), *Esop's Fables* (p. 71), *Proverbs* (pp. 71–76) and *Turkish Words* (pp. 76–103). The text of the *Grammar* ends with *Errata*, which is on a separate unnumbered page.

Vaughan's *Grammar*, with all grammatical problems described by the author, together with the lexical contents, was presented in Gilson's publication. However, Gilson did not include in her book the texts which together with other parts of Vaughan's work constitute the whole content of the *Grammar*. On several pages (71–76), Vaughan presented 53 Turkish proverbs together with their translation into English.

Here are the proverbs collected by Vaughan in his *Grammar*:

1. *Atalerdan kalme söz dür, bu gün ki yumurte yarınki ta(v)ukdan yek dür* (Atalerdan kalme suz dur, by gyun ky yumurte yarinky taukdan yec dur) 'This an old Saying, that an Egg to Day is better than a Hen to Morrow'<sup>2</sup>
2. *Azı bilme(y)in çoğı hiç bilmez* (Azy bilmein choghy hich bilmez) 'He who knows not a little, will never know much'.
3. *Er ölür adı kalur; at ölür meydanı kalur* (Ar ulur ady kalur; at ulur meidany kalur) 'When a Man dies, his Name remains; when a Horse dies, the Racing-Place remains';
4. *Oglan ağlama(y)ince meme vermezler* (Oglan ağlamainge meme virmezler) 'Till the Child cries, they will not give it suck';
5. *Ac ayu oynamaz* (Adg ayu oinamaz) 'A hungry Bear will not play';
6. *Ucuz etin çorbası tatsız olur* (Ojuz etting churbasy tatsiz olur) 'The Broath of cheap Flesh is tastless';

<sup>2</sup> For Turkish proverbs collected by Vaughan I propose my own transcription (in italics), however, both the Turkish words (in parentheses) and their English translations (in citation marks) are presented in original orthography used by the author. It should be added that as far as the English translation of the Turkish proverbs is concerned we quote them as they were written by Vaughan not trying to propose their modern version in terms of both vocabulary and orthography.

7. *İş işi gösterer* (Ish ishy gyusterer) ‘One Bargain begets another’;
8. *Eski dost düşman olmaz* (Esky dost dushman olmaz) ‘An old Friend will not be an Enemy’;
9. *Eşek maymunlar arasında ne işler?* (Eshec maimunlar arasında ne işler?) ‘An Ass amongst Monkeys, what Work will they make’;
10. *Alma ağacdan uzak düşmez* (Alma agadgdan uzak dushmez) ‘An Apple falls not far from the Tree’;
11. *Eyü kılıç yaramaz demirdan olmaz* (Eyu kilich yaramaz demirdan olmaz) ‘Bad Iron will not make a good Sword’;
12. *Adamden adame fark var* (Adamden Adame fark var) ‘There’s Difference between Man and Man’;
13. *Eski dost, eski hamam* (Esky Dost, esky hamam) ‘An old Friend and an old Bagno’;
14. *Eyü günü görmeyen, kem günü bayram sanur* (Eyu gyuny gurmeyen, kem gyuny Bairam sanur) ‘He who never sees a good Day, takes a bad one for a Festival, or holy Day’;
15. *El eli yur, iki el yüzi yur* (El elly yur, iki el yuzy yur) ‘One Hand washeth the other, and both the Face’;
16. *Eşek dağde ölür, zararı eve gelür* (Eshec dagde ulur, zarary evve ghelur) ‘The Ass dies on the Hill, but the Loss comes home’;
17. *Ayneye bakan kendi görür* (Auineye<sup>3</sup> bakan kendy gurur) ‘He who looks a Looking-Glass, sees Himself’;
18. *Eyülike eyülik, kemlike kemlik bulunur* (Eyulike eyulic, kemlike kemlik bulunur) ‘A Man meets with Good for Good, and Evil for Evil’;
19. *Ölmüş arslanın sakalını yolarsın* (Ulmish Arslanin sakaliny yolarsin) ‘You may pluck the Beard of a dead Lyon’;
20. *Burun yuzdan düşmez* (Burun yuzdan dushmez) ‘The Nose drops not from the Face’;
21. *Büyük başın, büyük agrısı olur* (Buyuc bashin, buyuc agrisy olur) ‘The Pain of a great Head is great’;
22. *Bakış atın dişine bakılmaz* (Bakshish atting dishine bakilmaz) ‘No Body looks a Gift-Horse in the Mouth’;
23. *Balık başdan kokar* (Baluk bashdan kokar) ‘A Fish stinks from the Head’;
24. *Bugün bize yarın size* (Bugyun bize, yarin size) ‘To Day for us, to Mor-row for you’;

<sup>3</sup> The form of this word (*Auineye*) seems to be incorrect. We cannot exclude typographical error in reference to the grapheme “u”.

25. *Bir ok ile iki kuş (v)urulmaz* (Bir ok ile iki kush orulmaz) ‘Two Birds are not to be shot with one Arrow’;
26. *Tez viren iki kere virir* (Tez viren, iki kerre virir) ‘He who gives soon, gives twice’;
27. *Çok viren göñülsiz virer; az viren candan virir* (Chok viren gyungulsiz virer; az viren jandan virir) ‘He who giveth much, gives not cordially; who gives little, doth it from it soul’;
28. *Hesabsız ne sakalın var köse?* (Hyssabsiz ne sakaling var kyuse?) ‘What makes your Beard so thin without an Account, (or Reckoning). Which if large, is enough to make a Turk pluck up his Beard by the Roots’;
29. *Hastaye döşegimi sorarsın?* (Hastaye dusheghimy sorarsın?) ‘Do you ask my Bed for the sick (Man?)’;
30. *Kırsız hırsız yoldaş dur* (Kirsiz khirsiz yoldash dur) ‘One Rouge, or Robber, is Companion for another’;
31. *Dostum ağladır, düşman güldürür* (Dostum agladır, dushman guldurur) ‘My Friend mourns, and my Enemy laughs’;
32. *Dost ileyi iç, alış viriş ayleme* (Dost ileyi ich, alish virish aileme) ‘Drink with a Friend, but don’t deal with him (in Buying and Selling)’;
33. *Dostler arasinde teklif yok dur* (Dostler arasinde teklif yok dur) ‘Among Friends there’s no Ceremony’;
34. *Delüye her gün Bayram* (Delluye her gyun Bairam) ‘Every Day is holy Day to a mad Man’;
35. *Sevenin kuliyuz, sevme(y)iñ Sultani* (Sevening kulijuz, sevmeining Sultany) ‘He who is Lord over them that love him, is the Slave of such as do’;
36. *Söz söylemek avretlerin dur, işlemek Erlerin dur* (Suz suilemec avretlerin dur, ishlemec Arlerin dur) ‘Tis Womens Business to talk, Mens to act’;
37. *Sakale gülen, yüze güler* (Sakale gyulen, yuze gyuler) ‘He that laughs at your Beard, laughs at or to your Face’;
38. *Soñ pişmanlık fayde virmez* (Sung pishmanlik faide virmez) ‘Repentance profiteth not when the Matter is at an End’;
39. *Acemi Nalbend Cehud Eşekinde öğrenür* (Agemy Nalbend Gehud Eshekinde ugrenur) ‘The Persian learns to be a Farrier by the Jew’s Ass’;
40. *Gerib kuşun yuvasın tañrı yapar* (Gherib kushung yuvasyn tangry yapar) ‘God makes the Nest of a Bird that’s a Stranger’;

41. *Fakirin oğlu olmakdan D vletl nin kulu olmak yec dir.* (Fakiring ogy olmakdan D vletluning kully olmak yec dir) ‘It’s better to be the Slave of the Rich, than Son of the poor Man’;
42. *Kapu ki pek kapadı Allahe ısmarla* (Kapu ke pec kapade Allahe ismarla) ‘Bid adieu to a Door that’s close shut’;
43. *G  i sevmed gi  eydan faide gel r* (Ghishy sevmedughy sheidan faide ghelur) ‘We often are profited by what we despise’;
44. *G z g rme(y)ince g   l kalanur* (Gyuz gurmeinge gyung-ul kalanur) ‘So long as the Eye sees not, the Heart’s secure’;
45. *G zdan ayrak olan, g   ldan dah  ayrak olur* (Gyuzdan airac olan, gyunguldan dahy airac olur) ‘He who is far out of Sight, is farther out of Mind’;
46. *G   ldan g   le yol var dur* (Gyunguldan gyungule yol var dur) ‘There’s a Path from Heart to Heart’;
47. *G   l kimi severse g zel o dur* (Gyungul kimy severse guzel o dur) ‘He is handsome who is beloved’;
48. *G r nen k ye, kula ız ne lazım?* (Gurunen cuiye, kolaghiz ne لازم?) ‘Having shewn our selves, or been seen at the Bath, what need hale we of Ears (that is, of other Ears);
49. *G mlek koftandan yakın dur* (Gumlec coftandan yakin dur) ‘The Shirt is nearer than the Under-vest or Cassock);
50. *M nasıb yolda  yolda binit yerinde d r* (Munasib yoldash yolde binit yerinde dur) ‘Comes facundus in via pro vehiculo est’;
51. *Viresi  erab i en, iki kere serho  olur* (Viresy sherab ichen, iki kerre serhosh olur) ‘He who drinks Wine free-cost, will be twice drunk’;
52. *Ya Devi  le, ya Devici Dimi ler* (Ya Devy ule, ya Devigy Dimishler) ‘The Camel dy’d, and they said ’twas the Camel-Driver’;
53. *Yazıcı kend ye kem yazmaz* (Yazigy kenduye kem yazmaz) ‘The Scriven-er writes not badly for himself’.

What can we say about the presented above collection of proverbs? First of all, if we confront this material with contemporary dictionaries or collections of Turkish proverbs we can state that many of the analysed proverbs are well known in contemporary Turkish.<sup>4</sup> However, in some cases, the eighteenth-century versions differ from their contemporary counterparts

<sup>4</sup> There are many collections or dictionaries of Turkish proverbs and idioms. For the purpose of our analysis we used *Atas zleri ve Deyimler S zl   * by  mer Asım Aksoy, I–II, Istanbul 1988.

lexically, but rather not semantically, e. g.: the proverb: *Oğlan ağlama(y)ince meme virmezler*<sup>5</sup> has its modern counterpart which is: *Ağlamayan çocuğa meme vermezler*.<sup>6</sup>

In some cases both historical and modern versions of a particular proverb are the same, excluding obvious phonetic differences e. g.: *Baluk başdan kokar* 'A Fish stinks from Head' – cf.: *Balık baştan kokar* id.

While analysing the proverbs we can try to ascertain the sources from which Vaughan collected his material. We cannot exclude that he excerpted some of the proverbs from the collection of proverbs included in Hieronymus Megiser's *Institutionum linguae turcicae libri* IV, Leipzig 1612.<sup>7</sup> Such supposition can be supported by the fact that among proverbs collected by Vaughan we find one which is translated into Latin: *Münasib yoldaş yolde binit yerinde dur* 'Comes facundus in via provehiculo est'. We find the same proverb in Megiser's *Institutionum*... written, of course, in German orthography and translated into Latin with the same words that we find in Vaughan's *Grammar* (Stein 1984: 75).

When comparing Vaughan's proverbs with their modern counterparts we cannot exclude that some of his proverbs have dialectal forms, so Vaughan could have heard them from someone speaking in a dialect not in a literary language. He only sketchily mentioned some sources he used when preparing his *Grammar*, however we do not know whether these were grammars by Meninski, Seaman or someone else.<sup>8</sup> He stated that in the following words:

But there is some Variation in the Grammar it self; and the Dialogues, Proverbs and Words, are a collection from other Books, and my own Observation.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> However, it seems that in this case Vaughan did not translate this proverb correctly. He translated: "Till the Child cries, they will not give it suck", whereas the meaning of the proverb is quite opposite, what results from the negative form of the gerund *ağlama(y)ince* 'until sb does not cry'. Thus the translation of this proverb should be as follows: "Until child does not cry they do not give him suck".

<sup>6</sup> The examples of contemporary Turkish proverbs are cited from the above mentioned dictionary.

<sup>7</sup> See: Stein H. (1984): *Eine Türkische Sprichwortsammlung des 17. Jahrhunderts*. "Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.", XXXVIII (1–2), pp. 55–104.

<sup>8</sup> Meninski à Mesgnien F. (1680): *Linguarum Orientalium Turcicae, Arabicae, Persicae Institutiones seu Grammatica Turcica, in qua Orthographia, etymologia, syntaxis, prosodia*, Viennæ; Seaman W. (1670): *Grammatica Linguae Turcicae*, Oxoniae.

<sup>9</sup> This information we can find in *The Preface* to his *Grammar*, p. XVI.

Surprisingly, in proverbs collected by Vaughan, there are some old phonetic features of the Turkish language typical of the period of old Ottoman-Turkish, where labial vowels dominated in stems and in suffixes.<sup>10</sup> We find these features in such instances as: *baluk*, *ayu*, *kalur* and others. However, in the seventeenth century the words presented above had either forms with illabial vowels or parallel forms with labial and illabial. This phenomenon showed that the vowel harmony was still in the process of developing.<sup>11</sup> Generally, in the eighteenth century the so-called labial harmony was already consolidated in reference to words both with illabial and labial sequences. Since in Vaughan's *Grammar*, published in 1709, we still meet forms with sequences as is shown in the above examples, therefore we may assume that these forms come rather from dialects and not from literary Turkish. It is obvious that dialects preserve some obsolete forms which are no longer in use in the literary language.

The matter which we should also mention here is the orthography Vaughan used when transcribing Turkish words. Judging by the form of some Turkish words we notice that the author was not consistent in the transcription he used. Admittedly, Gilson in her work explains the transcription methods and rules used by Vaughan but from many examples we see that not all Turkish words are written by him with compliance to the rules mentioned (Gilson 1987: 10–27). This remark generally refers to his recording of vowels. Trying to explain his own methodology with reference to recording vowels he wrote in Chapter I (*Of Orthography*) the following statement:

The formes of the Alphabets gives the Names of the Letters; and they are to be pronounc'd after the *English* way of sounding the Vowels (Vaughan 1709: 1).

Nevertheless, such a statement can only, to some extent, explain his method of transcription.

In the examples given below we see that, in some cases, the grapheme “a” represents the /a/ phoneme as in: *ayu* ‘bear’, in some other, /e/ phoneme as in: *er* (*ar*)<sup>12</sup> ‘man’, *elma* (*alma*)<sup>13</sup> ‘apple’, etc. The grapheme “e” is

<sup>10</sup> This problem is widely discussed by Räsänen M. (1949): *Beiträge zur Frage der türkischen Vokalharmonie*, “Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne”, XLV, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> See: *baluk*, *balık* in Meniński à Mesgnien F. (1680): *Thesaurus Linguarum Orientalium Turcicae, Arabicae, Persicae*, Viennae, I, p. 687.

<sup>12</sup> Vaughan's transcription is given in parenthesis, unless it is the same as ours.

<sup>13</sup> In this case we cannot exclude that this is a dialectal form *alma*, since such a form still exists in modern Anatolian dialects.

sometimes used for /e/ as in *perde* 'a curtain', sometimes for /i/ as in *cihan* (*gehan*) 'world'. The English author uses for /i/ once "i" and once "y", e. g.: *kemlik* 'evil', *iki* (*iky*) 'two'. In some cases he also uses "u" both for /ü/, /u/, or even /ö/, e. g.: *ölür* (*ulur*) 'he dies', *kalur* 'he remains'.

It is obvious that the transcription system Vaughan used for Turkish words is based upon English orthography, but still, as it has already been ascertained, Vaughan was inconsistent. We cannot exclude that he followed some orthographic changes introduced to the English language, trying to apply them to Turkish transcription (Gilson 1987: 10–27). Besides, Vaughan could have also followed transcription systems used by such other European authors as Meniński, Molino or Megiser. Some features of his transcription (Italian "gi" for Turkish /c/ or Italian "ch" for Turkish /k/) may confirm this thesis.<sup>14</sup>

Last but not least, when trying to evaluate the transcription system used by Vaughan one can again quote Gilson: "Certain Common Turkic phonemes involving mainly the vowels /ö/, /ü/ and /ı/ are very often not represented in the "Transkriptionstexts". In the literature pertaining to transcribed material, lack of a clearly defined grapheme for a Turkish phoneme has been rather consistently attributed to the fact that the Latin graphs at the transcriber's disposal were deficient, forcing him to conscious underrepresentation" (Gilson 1987: 24).

The above-presented collection of Turkish proverbs can perfectly contribute not only to the studies on the history of Turkish proverbs but also, in a wider aspect, to the scientific research on the culture of the Turkish world. After Aksoy we can repeat that:

Her ulusun atasözleri, kendi varlığının ve benliğinin aynasıdır.

[= The proverbs of each nation constitute the mirror of its existence and personality.] (Aksoy 1988: 27).

## Bibliography

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<sup>14</sup> In the text of *Proverbs* there are no examples of such features, but one can find some in the whole Turkish material included in Vaughan's *Grammar*.



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